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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to discuss the value of reading for pleasure. Research has shown that teenagers today do not read as much as earlier generations. There are several benefits from reading, such as skills in reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary. However, not only literacy is developed while reading, personal growth and experiences are other important profits that can be gained from reading.

The thesis offers an analysis of the blockbuster series *The Twilight Saga* by Stephenie Meyer. The theoretical framework includes theories of reading, identification, reader response, motivation, and critical reading.

In my thesis I address four research questions:

What characterizes the general reading process and its benefits?

What characterizes reading in the classroom?

How can appealing texts promote reading, and

What characterizes such an appealing text (the example of *The Twilight Saga*)?

My thesis concludes by stating that all reading is important, not only the literary canons and other sophisticated literature: Light, appealing, reading will promote more reading, and lead to more advanced reading. In addition, such light, appealing reading could serve as an excellent point of departure for classroom discussions of societal values.

1. Introduction

Harry Wormwood: A book? What do you want a book for?

Matilda: To read.

Harry Wormwood: To read? Why would you want to read when you got the television set sitting right in front of you? There's nothing you can get from a book that you can't get from a television faster.

Matilda by Roald Dahl, 1996

Finding a formula for how to increase teenagers' pleasure in reading is perhaps like looking for magic. However, sometimes this magic spell is closer at hand than it may appear. This thesis will discuss popular literature as a source to this enchanted pleasure of reading. Could it be that such literature, by most considered of little literary merit, actually works as a motivator for teenagers' reading? To find the key to successful reading would indeed be magical - could it be as simple as that if you read what interests you, this will increase the interest in the actual reading process, which again will lead to pleasure in reading?

I will focus on how to create a culture that fosters positive reading habits and motivation and how to build intellectual muscles by reading. I will go through and discuss a number of reading theories and theories of reader identity. In addition, the use of popular literature as motivation for reading and how to use this type of literature critically in teaching English will be discussed. My case will be the immensely popular blockbuster series, *The Twilight Saga*, by American author Stephenie Meyer.

A good fiction book has some of the same qualities as a good friend. Both can be a source of comfort and support. However, people do not read to gain more friendships. They read to attain knowledge and they read for desire. Being an avid reader and to be able to read large volumes is important for the

development of a language and for learning vocabulary and grammatical constructions. It is not a coincidence, nor is it a big surprise, that people who read more also write better. Stephen Krashen's studies have shown that "people who say they read more typically read better and have more mature writing style" (Krashen, 2004, 8). The relationship between reading and writing ability is here evident.

Literature does not only supply historical and cultural artefacts; it provides new worlds of experience. Literature as an object provides an exclusive point of unity and communication. Reading involves human beings' different senses: the smell of a page, the crackle of the binding glue, and the pebbled surface of a cover. When travelling the literary journey, readers do not only pass time, they are enriched by new knowledge and enjoyment. Readers extend their inner worlds and furnish their minds with new possibilities. Obviously, there is amazing potential in the literary world – why, then, are not all literate people avid readers?

1.1 Background

My aim in this thesis is twofold – first I am an avid reader myself and would like to share both the joy and the benefits of reading with my students. Second, the state of affairs when it comes to reading among the new generation is worrying.

Children's reading habits are a rather interesting and complex issue to deal with. An American survey in 2007 came to the alarming result that many students never, or hardly ever read (Pitcher et al. 2007). However, the additional interviews gave different results, some of the students did in fact read. They read magazines and articles; only they did not consider this reading material as proper readings, and therefore did not list them as reading in the survey. This says quite much about what students consider reading materials and also indicates that they are not fully aware of their reading habits. Could it be that they forget that they actually read simply because they enjoy what they are reading?

Teenagers read less as they grow older. Some perhaps prioritize other activities than reading, since they often have less time on their hands than earlier. However, there is no doubt that reading has stiff competition from other media. Children spend far less time on reading today, compared to what they did earlier. “Are we reading enough and are we reading the right books” are questions that are of great concerns in this context. Alan Jacobs asks if today’s generation is “the Dumbest Generation”, addicted as they are to multiple simultaneous stimuli in this age of distraction (Jacobs, 2011, 6). Although this quite provocative question seems to smack of arrogance and judgemental views, it also has a ring of truth about it.

Research Report #47 made by the American National Endowment for the Arts in 2007 addresses reading. It says that “young adults are reading fewer books in general”, and that “reading is declining as an activity among teenagers” (National Endowments of the Arts, 2007, 7). Americans aged 18-24 read no books for pleasure and less than one third of all 13 year olds in fact read on a daily basis (National Endowments of the Arts). Below, in Figure 1.1, is shown the weakening of reading for pleasure among Americans. If we focus on the age group 18-24 we clearly see a challenge:

Age group	1992	2002	Change	Rate of decline
18–24	59%	52%	-7 pp	-12%
25–34	64%	59%	-5 pp	-8%
35–44	66%	59%	-7 pp	-11%
All adults (18 and over)	61%	57%	-4 pp	-7%

Figure 1.1. Young Americans are reading fewer books. (National Endowments of the Arts, 2007, 7).

This research shows the percentage of young Americans who read books that are not required for schoolwork, and indicates a rate of decline of 12% from 1992 to 2002 for people aged 18 to 24.

But there is hope also in this bleak situation. A recent Danish study made by Bo Steffensen shows that children aged 10-13, who had learned to read automatically and spontaneously, in fact read more now than earlier (Steffensen, 2005, 38). However, as this study shows, this “eager to read phase” fades when the children become teenagers. The extensive reading drops and their reading habits often change depending on their gender, age, and interests. Probably these once so enthusiastic readers read only literature related to school and education.

In the research from the National Endowment for Arts there are also interesting findings when it comes to reading scores for nine and seventeen year olds. The reading scores for the seventeen year olds are dropping, but for the nine year olds things are brighter: their scores are at an all-time high, which Figure 1.2, below, shows:

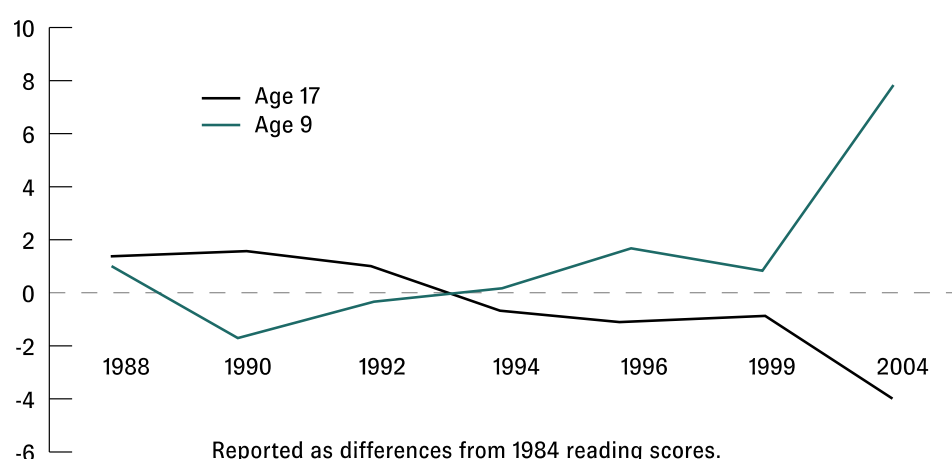


Figure 1.2. Trend in Average Reading Scores for Students Ages 17 and 9. (The National Endowments for the Arts, 2007, 12).

Why is there such a dramatic difference between the two age groups – what has happened in the years between? Has there been a more conscious focus in school on the importance of reading skills and may this reflect a better academic and social climate amongst the youngest ones? It could also be that there is easier access to a variety of texts? Another reason why nine year olds are doing better

in their reading scores now than earlier could be because educators have seen what has happened to the older students and therefore teachers and school administrators have put more resources into reading at a younger age.

There are many possible explanations and to investigate these are impossible within the scope of this master thesis. However, the decrease in reading among teenagers is noteworthy, and according to the National Endowments of the Arts, there has been a “gradual worsening of reading skills among teens; and declining proficiency in adult readers” (The National Endowments for the Arts, 2007, 21). This is an American study. However, there are similar recent developments in other countries as well.

In 2005 Are Turmo released a study on Norwegian students seen in an international perspective and their academic competence in different subjects. This is the newest comparative study Norway has taken part in and it gives us an extensive and summarizing picture of Norwegian students in an international perspective (Turmo, 2005, 53). The figures that are interesting in this matter are the ones regarding reading and English. First, let us have a look at reading.

The research shows average results in reading for students in each country and reading comprehension is defined by PISA like this: “Reading literacy is understanding, using and reflecting on written text, in order to achieve one’s goals, to develop one’s knowledge and potential and to participate in society” (OECD, 2003, quoted by Turmo, 2005, 56). The results from 2005 are compared to results from 2000 and show that most countries have had more or less of a setback during these three years (Turmo, 2005, 57). As for Norwegian students, these setbacks are not dramatic, however, they show a tendency that the development is heading in a negative direction.

The same article by Turmo refers to another survey done in 2002, when EU measured students’ competence in English as a foreign language among 10 graders. The test that was given to the students tested their listening skills, reading skills, grammatical skills, and their skills in simple written production.

This has provided information about English teaching and different background factors for learning English in the participating countries. The study shows that all these countries score the highest in reading comprehension and the lowest when producing written texts (Elisabeth Ibsen, 2004, quoted by Turmo, 62). Earlier we saw that Krashen argued that reading and writing go hand in hand (Krashen, 2004, 8). This is not the case here. However, when studying Norway in this matter, students score better in writing than the other participating countries (Denmark, Finland, France, The Netherlands, Spain, and Sweden). So all in all, Norwegian students have high scores in all the skills tested.

It may be that the Norwegian students have a small advantage over the others here. However, the negative tendency needs to be taken seriously, and it is no question that reading has to be put on the academic agenda. It needs to be taken seriously in order to improve both children's and young adults' appetite for reading.

1.2 Aim of thesis

The aim of this thesis is to shed light on how to promote the pleasure of reading. I suggest doing this through the use of popular literature. In order to reach this aim I have formulated the following research questions:

1. What characterizes the general reading process and its benefits?
2. What characterizes reading in the classroom?
3. How can appealing texts promote reading?
4. What characterizes such an appealing text (the example of *The Twilight Saga*)?

1.3 Outline of thesis

After this brief introduction of my topic and its background, let us now look at the method and structure. My method is entirely theoretically based. First I will go through research in the field of reading, and reading for pleasure. Second, with that research as a grid, I will enter into the English classroom and discuss

how to motivate students to read. Third, I will move on to show how appealing texts may promote the pleasure of reading. Fourth, the characteristics of such an appealing text will be defined, and my case is the popular phenomenon *The Twilight Saga*. There will be a text analysis of the series in regard to themes and criticism with hands-on examples. Finally, there will be a short sum-up of my discussion together with my conclusion. Let us now move on to the theoretical basis.

1.4 Theoretical framework

This section will deal with the different theories and research in the field of reading and reading for pleasure. What characterizes the general reading process and its benefits is the question I will try to answer.

One of literature's tasks should be to provide the reader with involvements that he or she does not necessarily experience in real life, according to Louise Rosenblatt, but that somehow reflect real life issues (Rosenblatt, 2002, 158). This will enable the readers to look at their own problems more objectively, since the problem is described outside of themselves, so to speak, even though the issues in a text describe personal experiences (Gunhild Blindheim Bergo, 2012, 13). It is easier to see through a magnifying glass than a mirror, where you see yourself.

Joseph. A. Appleyard suggests different stages of readers' psychological development from children to adults and in what ways reading effects this growth. When becoming a youth/ young adult he or she is a "thinker", who wants answers to the really big questions in life:

Typically the reading is accompanied by a running exchange of questions and answers, comments about the story, and references to other experiences of the child and the reader and to people they know (Appleyard, 1991, 21).

Teenagers look for stories that can help them find truth and meaning in life. They search for themes that are important in their lives and literature may provide

some answers. Gunhild Blindheim Bergo argues that teenage girls read romantic literature in order to process questions they have (Bergo, 1012, 8). By reading they accustom themselves for what to come later in life. They love to drift away into other worlds and realities and believe, for just a short time, that they are one of the characters in the story.

According to Anne Reeves, teenage readers want to read about various characters similar to themselves and whom they can identify with (Reeves, 2004, 240). They do not wish to read about young people who lose control over their own lives or fail in any way. They look for literature that confirms the notion they have on being successful in adulthood (Reeves, 2004, 240). This is valuable knowledge for teachers to be aware of, since the teenage readers then can be offered literature that contains teenage issues. Reeves argues this point well:

Reading a popular book with full attention and enthusiasm is surely a more valuable experience than skimming and pretending to have read a literary book one finds dull (Reeves, 2004, 246).

Following this, reading teen romances may be a successful formula for achieving reading since teenagers, as we all do, identify more easily with others of their own kind. Identity is created in the interaction between our outer and inner selves. Common psychological knowledge emphasises, that putting oneself in someone else's place creates identity through the process of looking at oneself through the eyes of another. In general, as social beings, we constantly strive to find ourselves and a place to belong. When it comes to literature, and this search for belonging, Perry Nodelman and Mavis Reimer define identification as "the perception that a character in a work of literature is like oneself" (Nodelman & Reimer, 2003, 68). It is important for the reader in order to find pleasure in a certain literary work, to be able to mirror him- or herself in the fictional character. When entering the literary sphere, the reader is in limbo, in a world between daydreaming and reality. Sometimes readers become so absorbed into their own inner universes, that they simply forget time, place and real life. Whether you identify with a certain character, or see yourself as a bystander, you never the less find yourself in an imaginary world.

Some readers become obsessed by their interpretation of a text and mentally strive to make the literary world identical to their own, familiar world. Steffensen claims that the most central fascination of reading is the aspect of identity. There is strong urge, a mission, among readers to make the literary characters identical to real life living human beings (Steffensen, 2005, 50). It is safe to assume that such a strong identification only takes place when a reader really falls into “the rabbit’s hole” and forgets time and place. This feeling is the perfect picture of finding pleasure in reading. Jacobs refers to reading as one of the “great human delights” (Jacobs, 2011, 10).

This choosing reader is never merely passive, never simply a consumer, but constantly engages in critical judgement, sometimes withholding sympathy with a thoughtful wariness, and then, in the most blessed moments, when trust has been earned, giving that sympathy wholly and without stint (Jacobs, 2011, 150).

It is interesting here that Jacobs stresses that reading is such an active process, it is certainly also therefor it is so rewarding. When first having caught a glimpse of what reading has to offer it is impossible to go back to a life without the pleasure, joy and wisdom reading provides. But how can young learners learn to appreciate these qualities?

School reading brings more tension to this issue since often students are categorised by their reading abilities. “In school, reading gets linked to a zigzagging alternation between empowerment and anxiety, an alternation that for some people can last a lifetime” (Jacobs, 2011, 147). There is a strong connection between reading and succeeding in school. Krashen claims that reading may be the only way to develop literary skills:

Reading is the only way, the only way we become good readers, develop a good writing style, an adequate vocabulary, advanced grammar, and the only way we become good spellers (Krashen, 1993, 23).

Since language is very complex, learning many rules, one rule at a time, is hard, if not impossible. Reading is perhaps the basis of language education. Studies show that people who read more also write better. According to a study made by

Krashen, children that read 1 million words in a year, add at least 1000 words to their active vocabulary annually (Krashen, 1993). This is a clear indicator of the benefits of reading for language development and vocabulary building.

Through Krashen's research it is obvious that reading is valuable, and he especially recommends free reading. In a school context, free voluntary reading means that time is set aside to allow students to read what *they* want to read. Krashen suggests that the major goal in language education should be to inspire free reading and to make sure this really happens:

The evidence is overwhelming that reading for pleasure – that is, self-selected recreational reading – is the major source of our ability to read, to write with an acceptable writing style, to develop vocabulary and spelling abilities, and to handle complex grammatical constructions. The evidence holds both for English as a first language and for English as a second and foreign language (Krashen, 2011, 23).

We all know that we can lead a horse to water, but we cannot make it drink. The same goes for reading. Hence, what is important then as a first step, is to provide the students with readily available books. We must make sure that there is easy access to books.

Being good readers in the first language helps us become better readers in a second language too. This argument only gains in strength as we look into the benefits of possessing good reading skills. According to Jim Cummins there is strong evidence that much of the reading ability transfers to the second language (Cummins, 1991). When having knowledge of both the world and the subject in the first language, this can make second language input much easier to understand. Also, it is safe to assume that already experienced pleasure in reading is translatable from one language to another.

There is no doubt that providing good reading habits and a good reading culture in the classroom may be done by working actively with literature as it simultaneously provides more general skills like increased vocabulary, grammar skills and spelling. This follows up the theoretical framework of Krashen already

referred to above. Figure 1.3 below sums up my findings on the benefits of reading:

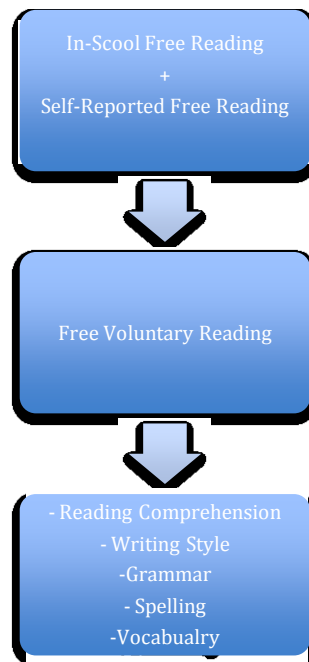


Figure 1.3. The Reading Hypothesis.

This figure shows the importance of free reading and how it affects different language skills. By reading, children learn grammar and vocabulary in an indirect, more natural way, as compared to being subjected to drillings and repetition. Learners will discover, by themselves, that a language consists of parts that are connected.

Accepting Krashen's theories about the connection between reading and language development as a given, there is no doubt that teachers have an important job to do to when it comes to motivating students to find pleasure in reading. What does the Curriculum Guidelines say about English as a subject and what should teachers emphasise on in the second language classroom?

The English Curriculum Guidelines (henceforth K-06) presented in 2006 focus on three main areas. These are Language learning, Communication, and Culture, society and literature. This curriculum stresses language learning particularly through literature and the development of individuals. The students are to encounter literary texts like poems, songs, jokes, cartoons and e-mails besides short stories, excerpts of novels and autobiographies.

The K-06 further suggests more specific goals in regards to literature in the classroom. Students are to be able to read in a second language as part of the practical language competence, which includes understanding of, exploration of, and reflection over an amount of increasingly demanding texts. A development in reading skills in the second language will help to improve reading skills in the first language as well (Læreplanverket for Kunnskapsløftet). The guidelines also emphasise that literature from English speaking countries contributes to giving pleasure of reading and also a deeper understanding of both others and oneself (Læreplanverket for Kunnskapsløftet).

The reading process is rather complex, however its benefits are unquestionable. Krashen shows the importance of voluntary reading and how it affects a variety of reading skills. Next we will move on to different theories on reading. In the coming section I will discuss the reader response theory, reading habits, reading volume, avid reading, and reader identity.

2. What characterizes the general reading process and its benefits?

If you want your children to be bright, read them fairytales. If you want them to be brilliant, read them even more fairytales.

Albert Einstein (Goodreads)

People read literature for many reasons. However, without personal drive very few people will cherish reading and stay readers forever. The pleasure of reading does not start by the act of reading itself, more it starts through children listening to stories (Tom Horn, 2011). Their literary appetite awakens, they gain new insights and their horizons are broadened, and this will hopefully result in a greater interest in life and the people they share their world with. A pleasure in reading is founded in a small child through story telling that gives the child the ability to create inner pictures, and makes the child yearn for more stories, more knowledge and more pleasure.

During the act of reading, there is a special meeting between a reader and the text where the individual aspect is crucial. The individual aspect is one of the main factors in the enjoyment of reading. One book does not suit all readers, nor do all readers prefer the same book. Quite a few readers experience that books they recommend to others do not always enthuse, and on the other hand, it is not for certain that what may excite other readers will excite you. Where a person is in life and earlier experiences often decides the experience of significance and identification during reading: Reading is subjective and actually not dependent on literary value.

In this part I will continue to discuss the issue of reading. First, let us have a closer look at its various features. Next, I will shed light on and discuss different

matters concerning reading, such as the reading response theory, reading habits, avid reading, and reader identity.

2.1 Reader response theory

Nodelman and Reimer state that all reading and writing “takes place within the context of larger cultural systems of meaning” (Nodelman & Reimer, 2003, 218). Each society has its own common values and beliefs internalized by the people living there. In that sense we can say that readers are made, not born. Reading is a social act not only in the way it communicates both experiences and views, readers have the opportunity to share and discuss their reading experiences with others.

However, reading is also an individual act since the reader and the text tend to form a symbiotic relationship. While reading, the readers focus on both the reading event and what the texts do to them. The text becomes the meeting point between the writer and the reader. The author has already created the text with words and phrases, but the reader is the one who creates meaning, “inner pictures”, through reading. Reading simply by decoding what is written on the page, is not enough to accomplish a meaningful meeting between the text and the reader. Comprehension is also essential, in fact “that is what reading is all about – decoding and comprehension” (Reading Resources). So, in order to experience successful reading these cognitive elements need to be developed.

Anne Cunningham and Keith Stanovich support this argument by stating “reading has cognitive consequences that extend beyond its immediate task of lifting meaning from a particular passage”(Cunningham & Stanovich, 2001, 137). The cognitive importance is thus more important than the simple act of making sense out of letters and words; reading has a great impact on the reader’s development of the cognitive competence. To be able to understand what is being read, it is essential to have pre-existing structures. In *The Pleasures of Children’s Literature*, Nodelman and Reimer explain how reading literary texts “provides readers with schemata that can help them make sense of their

responses to the new texts they encounter” (Nodelman & Reimer, 2003, 52). This means being able to link unknown and new texts to an already familiar world of experiences. In other words: In order to understand something new it is essential to have pre-existing knowledge. For readers to be fully able to read in any proper sense of the word, a conscious, inner activity is needed together with the supply of the readers’ own experiences and characters. They will always interpret a text with a basis in their own backgrounds and beliefs.

This leads our attention to the reader response theory and the way in which it focuses on the process of reading and responding to texts. Here the focus is primarily on the reader in determining the meaning of a text. Hence, emphasis is on the “addressee” of verbal communication (Nodelman & Reimer, 2005, 219). Therefore, I propose the following simple definition: reader response is the reader’s re-creation of the literary piece within his or her own mind.

There are several theories in the history of response and reception studies, and also there are numerous contributors to these theories. From the late 1960s into the 1980s these studies have entered pedagogical theory and practice in the literary classroom from primary schools to universities (Nodelman & Reimer 2003, 220). Wolfgang Iser is one of the very first theorists in the field, introducing the concept of the “implied reader” (Øystein Aspaas, 2005, 4). The implied reader can be described as the “right” reader with the “right” attitudes (moral, cultural, etc.) who will achieve the most from a certain text (Iser, 1974). Iser views reading as a process consisting of three elements: the act of reading, the following development of the text as a whole, and the dialogue between the reader and the text. The traditional way of interpreting a text has been to examine its meaning and then accept the different values it represents. However, texts often have a more dynamic character and are rather confusing and disturbing. Hence, the fundamental question becomes what actually takes place in the meeting between the text and the reader. The text becomes alive in the meeting with its reader. Until then it is just ink on a piece of paper.

Iser sees reading as a “negotiation between a text, which prestructures a role for a reader it implies, and an actual reader, who bring their own experiences into play in fulfilling that role” (as quoted in Nodelman & Reimer, 2003, 220). Consequently, the meaning is a product of a complex interaction between the text and the reader, and a text comes to life only when it is read or experienced by a reader.

Louise Rosenblatt also emphasizes the personal experience of literature. She calls the meeting between a reader and a text a transaction. Hence, the reader and the text are not two separate elements. During the 1980s she developed the already existing theory by arguing that all reading in fact is a shared, equally defining relationship between the reader and the text (Rosenblatt, 1986). It is important not to neglect the personal, aesthetic experience of reading literature.

In her book *The Reader, the Text and the Poem*, Rosenblatt explains that aesthetic reading is when readers read creatively and brings individual background knowledge, beliefs, and context into the reading (Rosenblatt, 1994). Reading literature should provide readers with experiences they are able to reflect upon, not only reading for communicating.

A good illustration of Rosenblatt’s transaction model is a spiral in motion where both the reader’s world and the text’s world enter into one another and create meaning, much like the double helix (Bergo, 2012, 13). Here, the transaction occurs in a movement back and forth between the reader and the text. Further, Rosenblatt emphasizes the importance of the reader’s previous experiences in reading, which again leads to different interpretations of texts. If 10 people read the same book, there will in all probability be 10 different understandings of it as well (Bergo, 2012, 13). No two people read a literary text in the same way; each and every one brings his, or her, own world into it.

A great deal of emphasis is placed on the reader in Rosenblatt’s transaction theory and it requires us to

see the reading act as an event involving a particular individual and a particular text, happening at a particular time, under particular circumstances, in a particular social and cultural setting, and as part of the ongoing life of the individual and the group (Rosenblatt, 1985, 100).

One main difference between Rosenblatt's theory and Iser's theory is that in Iser's view the reader "owns" the interpretation process, and the reader is the one who alone makes the meaning of a text, while Rosenblatt emphasizes the transaction process between the reader and the text. Even though the reader is central in Rosenblatt's theory, the text is taken into account too.

Rosenblatt argues that reading is an active experience that plays a unique part since it comes with such special prerequisites. Reading will always be a unique and individual experience:

The reader brings to the work personality traits, memories of past events, present needs and preoccupations, a particular mood of the moment and a particular physical condition. These and many other elements in a never-to-be-duplicated combination determine his response to the text (Rosenblatt, 2005, 30-31).

Rosenblatt's theoretical framework will be deliberated upon further when discussing reading in the classroom, as she relates her research to teaching. However, to end this section let us continue to reading habits, reading volume and avid reading. In the end of this section I will discuss reader identification, a phenomenon that is a main reason why people crave good reading experiences in the first place.

2.2 Reading habits

In the introduction the question was asked whether today's generation reads less because of the several concurrent stimuli they are subjected to. Or could it be that they lack of good reading habits? Good reading habits must come from somewhere (Horn, 2011). Perhaps today's generation is not used to seeing their

parents reading, except perhaps newspapers and magazines. Adults have perhaps forgotten to be good reading models in this age of distractions?

Reading needs to be promoted from an early age and constantly nurtured to help children become lifelong readers. Free and leisure reading is the key to success when a child becomes older and is supposed to focus on academic and study-related reading, which, by necessity, is an overemphasised kind of reading among students. Reading for pleasure should perhaps be better encouraged in order to develop a language. Cunningham and Stanovich argue that reading volume has an essential impact on the development of vocabulary, reading speed, and fluency, verbal ability, general knowledge, and academic achievements (Cunningham & Stanovich, 2001, 142-143). Laurence Ogle and Erin Pahlke report that an international comparative study shows that the more often children read for fun, the higher the score on the literacy reading scale becomes (Ogle & Pahlke, 2003). Evidently, in order to promote lifelong reading habits leisure reading is important.

This is where school can play a significant part if essential actions are taken in order to promote reading among children. In Norway, there are schools that have really taken this problem seriously: Reading has become stardom. Both national and local reading projects have as goals to stimulate greater pleasure in reading among children and young adolescents, and the demands for a better reading competence have increased (Marianne Tellmann, 2011, 1). According to a PISA survey in 2009 students who do not read for pleasure score much lower than those who do, and for the first time “reading engagement” is included in the definition of reading competence (Tellmann 2011, 2). This tells us that it is necessary to possess the “right” reading habits. A positive attitude towards reading and a frequent, self-motivating reading of various self-chosen texts are without much doubt what characterizes a good reader. As mentioned, there has to be a personal drive in order to become fond of reading and thus stay a reader forever. The pleasure of reading cannot be forced upon students.

2.3 Reading volume

Reading volume is the prime contributor to individual differences in children's vocabularies, and readers who are good at decoding read and "have the best context available for interfering new words" (Cunningham & Stanovich, 2001, 143). A question in this context is to what extent quantity reading can contribute to increased skills and knowledge. There is little doubt that a child who reads much has better possibilities to run an upward reading spiral than a child who is less exposed to literature and who therefore follows the spiral downwards. The rich become richer and the poor become poorer, so to speak.

Comprehension abilities and reading volume are in a mutual relationship, as you cannot become a decent reader without reading much, or without the necessary reading skills. Cunningham and Stanovich put it bluntly: "Those who read a lot will enhance their verbal intelligence; that is, reading will make them smarter" (Cunningham & Stanovich, 2001, 147). In order to become a good reader and to be able to read large volumes of texts, it is essential that children learn how to read at an early age. These children will have an advantage when developing vocabulary and syntactic structures.

Could it be that printed texts contribute to vocabulary more than oral language? If so, will children who start reading late then, and perhaps turn into non-readers not benefit from the same vocabulary growth as those who read at an early age? Keith Stanovich claims, "when children are having too much trouble with word recognition reading for meaning is hindered" (Stanovich, 2000, 393). The process of reading will not be rewarding at all when a child does not understand what is being read, and the search for meaning will demand too much perceptive capacity from the reader. Such a situation will lead to the reader separating between the text and the comprehension processes, instead of making them work together.

Some of the most important "tools" then to be able to perform quantity reading, is a combination of developed decoding skills, much reading practice, and

reading a variety of texts, beginning from an early age and in early grades. Then children can become avid readers.

2.4 Avid reading

When good reading habits are established the chances of becoming an avid reader are present. An avid reader is someone who has a passion for books. The enjoyment of reading is the hallmark of an avid reader. Reading speed, numbers of books read, and literary qualities are secondary. The most important aspect of the reading process for the avid reader is pleasure. Anne Reeves, an avid reader herself, explains her encounters with literature as fantastic experiences: “Stories themselves were magic circles, and once inside, it was impossible to get out unchanged” (Reeves, 2004, 7). This kind of enthrallment is something that all bookworms will readily recognize.

How we become avid readers is a question that concerns researchers.

Cunningham and Stanovich claim that lifelong reading habits are strong predictors of verbal cognitive growth (Cunningham & Stanovich, 2001, 137).

Then, what predicts these habits? According to the same authors

students who get off to a fast start in reading are more likely to read more over the years, and, furthermore, this very act of reading can help children compensate for modest levels of cognitive ability by building their vocabulary and general knowledge (Cunningham & Stanovich, 2001, 146-147).

Reading and cognitive development are linked together since people who read more also possess more knowledge. Krashen argues, “reading is a powerful means of developing reading comprehension ability, writing style, vocabulary, grammar, and spelling” (Krashen, 2004, 37). Research shows when reading (for pleasure) good things will happen. There will be an improvement in knowledge and academic texts will be easier to read. Also, there will be an improvement of writing style and vocabulary.

2.5 Reader identity

As already stated, identity is created as the result of an interaction between our inner and outer selves. Identifying with a fictional character is like looking at oneself in a mirror. Nodelman and Reimer explain this identification quite simply as “the perception that a character in a work of literature is like oneself” (Nodelman & Reimer, 2003, 68). Literature, and the subsequent process of reading, has played essential roles when it comes to the construction of identity for the readers. By showing events from the fictional world, the literary characters encourage identification.

Steffensen’s observations of reader identity offer a straight forward and easy-to-grasp theory on this complex and extensive issue. He bases his theories on literary texts, since, he argues, these hold the characteristics that make it possible for the reader to identify with the protagonists. The literary world is a “true” world, he claims, and the reader possesses insight in these literary persons in this literary world (Steffensen, 2005, 43). For the reader there is a thin line between reality and fiction when drifting away into a story. What is the truth, one may ask. What takes place in a person’s mind is perhaps as true as anything else in this world. There is perhaps a connection between dreams or fantasy and reality. Steffensen argues that the fictional world is true because it is told by a voice that is credible within this literary world. The imaginary world may at times be easier to make sense of, at least some of the fictional universes, as opposed to the real world, which often can seem rather unclear and disordered. So, what has all this to do with reader identity?

First, a literary text needs to be interesting to the readers in order for them to react to it. Obviously, the readers enjoy texts that deal with themes and issues familiar to them, something enjoyable that they have experienced. Steffensen says that books that hold such characteristics attract the readers and that they are greatly appreciated. Also, the readers tend to remember these texts better than texts they do not relate to (Steffensen, 2005, 42). The central prerequisite for the fascination for books that the readers can relate to, is that they create associations to the characters in them and this association makes the readers

identify with different persons in the book. The readers see themselves as these fictional persons.

Second, Steffensen divides reader identity into two systems: introjection and projection (Steffensen, 2005, 43-44). Introjection identity is when the readers give themselves certain characteristics that are held by the fictive person(s). The readers see themselves as the protagonists in the story and award themselves with the same personality and features as their fictional mirror images. When it comes to projection identity, the readers transfer to the fictional characters feelings that they themselves possess. By doing this the readers, often unconsciously, use their own feelings and give these to the imaginary characters. (Steffensen, 2005, 44). Steffensen explains this clearly:

The text is used as a mirror where the readers primarily see themselves and not the text (Steffensen, 2005, 53).

Even in the simplest fantasy world the readers will assume that the characters possess normal human and bodily traits. Through identification the readers strive to make the characters from the literary world identical to living human beings in the real world. Obviously, as fictional characters really do not have any feelings, they are open to be given these by the reader. It is quite understandable that readers are able to identify with fictional characters through projection, since it only confirms that others are, or feel, like them.

Literature can be used when dealing with identity issues, and it can help to develop a person's register of feelings. Through reading the reader is exposed to a variety of fictional themes that are similar to real life problems and issues. To incorporate characteristics of a fictional person into your own is like picking up traits of others. If the character behaves in a certain way, the reader will sometimes try to integrate this behavior into his or her own psyche, unconsciously or not. If characters are difficult for the reader to identify with, this becomes even more obvious. If a text is difficult to understand because of historical shortcomings or inexperienced readers, it is hard to invest emotionally in the different characters. For instance, teenagers in Scandinavia will probably

find it difficult to fully understand such a concept as “desperate poverty”, and in turn, this will make it difficult for them to relate to a story dealing with this topic.

In this part of the paper we have observed a selection of theories in the aspect of reading. All these theories are important in order to fully understand the reading process. Let us now move further and have a look at what characterizes reading in the classroom. In order to examine this properly we need to look into the curriculum guidelines before discussing the engaged reader and strategies we use when reading. Another important issue in this next unit is what motivates reading.

3. What characterizes reading in the classroom?

To be able to answer what characterizes reading in the classroom it is necessary to examine the curriculum goals and how to make students become involved in reading. K-06 offers suggestions and guidance to both choices of texts, literary and language skills, as well as the cognitive aspect of reading.

3.1 Classroom and Curriculum Guidelines

According to K-06, Norwegian students are to encounter a variety of texts; from nursery rhymes to Shakespeare (Læreplanverket for Kunnskapsløftet). Hopefully this mixture of texts will provide a greater passion for reading and also offer a deeper understanding and comprehension of oneself and others. In addition, the students are to encounter other people’s view of life, their values and culture through reading. The curriculum suggests that English literature, film, music, and other kinds of art can inspire the student’s growth and creativity in various genres and media (Læreplanverket for Kunnskapsløftet). Obviously, there are a great variety of books to choose from as the curriculum suggests “from nursery rhymes to Shakespeare” and this is where the teacher plays an important part in

selecting and suggesting which texts to read. Choosing books to present in a class is an exciting challenge. Teachers never actually know whether specific books will suit the class. Even though the students are supposed to have learned the same curriculum, they are individuals with different skills, interests and histories. Gillian Lazar argue that some students have a level of literary competence that helps them to understand literary texts even though their linguistic competence is considerably limited. Others may have little literary knowledge, but are able to figure out the literary meaning behind the text (Lazar, 2012, 54). This is why the individual aspect of reading is important; each reader is unique.

Aidan Chambers points to the aspect of power when it comes to selection of literature. According to him, those “who choose are exercising power” (Chambers, 1996, 54). Chambers lists several significant points for selecting reading material: Time to spend on a book, the age of the learners, the context in which the book is to be read and discussed, and the value of honouring the children’s taste in books (Chambers, 1996, 55-56).

Just as children talk best when they know that everything is honourable respectable, so children’s mental “set” – their attitude to formal talk - will be positive and favourable if they know that their tastes in reading will also be respected (Chambers, 1996, 56).

This speaks for itself, and needs to be on the teaching agenda. Children should not have literature they do not appreciate imposed on them by adults who think they know what is best. Whether the selection of reading material emerges from discussing the choice of texts with the children, or if it comes from the children’s enthusiasm, the teacher needs to display willingness. Not least, the process must be honest and understood by the readers; the children.

Further, according to K-06, students are also expected to consider a selection of English texts representing a variety of genres like poems, novels, fairy tales, short stories films and plays from different parts of the world. The guidelines state that English as a subject should offer the possibilities to take part in

communication based on personal, social, literary, and interdisciplinary issues. In order to be a part of the international and relational communication, we need to master the English language. However, learning English is not only a tool for global communication, it is also a subject where the students are supposed to develop.

To be able to read in a second language is part of the practical language competence, which includes understanding of, exploration of, and reflection about an amount of increasingly demanding texts. A development in reading skills in the second language will also help improve reading skills in the first language (Læreplanverket for Kunnskapsløftet). In order to succeed, students need proficiencies in both reading and language. K-06 points out that reading literature from English speaking countries contributes to giving pleasure of reading and also a deeper understanding of both others and one self (Læreplanverket for Kunnskapsløftet). This gives the students an exclusive opportunity to travel the world without leaving their classrooms.

These different aspects of reading are all important when discussing the cognitive benefits of reading. As these have been examined with the specific goals in the curriculum in particular, let us now continue with the English classroom. What seems to be significant is how to create involved readers.

3.2. The engaged reader

Without doubt, a person who does not enjoy reading in the first language, will not enjoy reading in a second language either. This is a given. The engaged reader is someone who is motivated, knowledgeable, socially interactive, and strategic. Below this is illustrated in Figure 3.1.

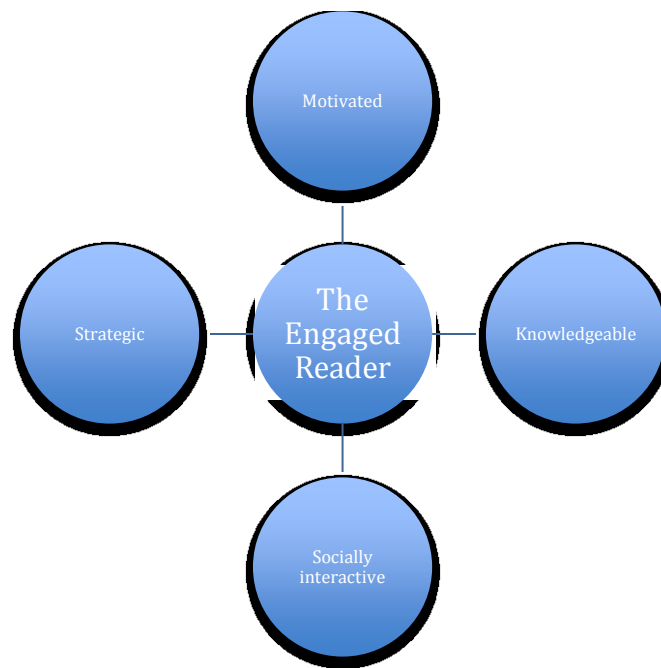


Figure 3.1. The Engaged Reader (Linda Gambrell, 1996, 16).

Figure 3.1 above shows how all components work together to create involved readers. When readers are motivated they choose to read both for gaining new knowledge, and also for experiencing a literary journey. By using earlier experiences to make sense of new understandings of a text the engaged readers become knowledgeable. In addition, they learn how to gain knowledge from a text and how to relate “from text reading in a variety of personal, intellectual, and social contexts (Gambrell, 1996, 16). The strategic readers use their cognitive strategies to decipher, interpret, understand, observe and control the reading process in order to make their reading reasonable and satisfactory. Reading is not an individual activity even if the act itself consists of a reader and a book. In fact, one of the pleasures of reading is to share literary texts and experiences with others. The meaning of a text can be extended when communicating and discussing it. The process is socially interactive, but also dependent on continuous strategies to negotiate each individual interpretation.

3.3 Strategies

While reading there are certain thinking strategies that we use. We may not even be aware of these strategies; they are just lying there at the back of our heads as great repertoires of schemes. Ellin Oliver Keene and Susan Zimmermann say that these strategies can be labelled in many ways: visualizing, connecting, questioning, analysing, recalling, and self-monitoring (Keene & Zimmermann, 1997). Let us take them one by one. First, when visualizing the readers create mental pictures and sense images from what they read and they connect the story to their own experiences or to other readings or other events that have taken place somewhere in the world. Albert J. Harris and Edward R. Sipay uncover that visualization connects new vocabulary to previous knowledge (Harris & Sipay, 1990) , which is also linked to Rosenblatt and her beliefs that this strategy encourages students to make personal connection to a text (Rosenblatt, 1994). This is in close relationship with her theories about reader response.

The special meanings, and, more particularly, the submerged associations that these words and images have for the individual reader will largely determine what the work communicates to him (Rosenblatt, 1983, 30-31).

Second, readers need to both make suggestions and contribute in a variety of imaginary worlds. They need to take part in the transaction with the text in order for it to make meaning. Third, readers also interrogate or question the text by actively wonder about what they read and interfere with the text by predicting, interpreting or drawing conclusions (Keene & Zimmermann, 1997).

Forth, in this regard the analysing strategy is perhaps the most related to reading in school and is often encouraged by the teacher. Here the students/readers are supposed to take into consideration the text's structure, the tone of the author, point of view, theme, vocabulary, and so on. Fifth, to be able to recall and summarize a text is perhaps also viewed as a classroom activity. When reading a book at home, voluntarily, we do not sit down trying to remember information from the story; we just read. Last, the self- monitor strategy is centred on the

readers and their natural inner dialogue, and how they make use of their metacognitive tools to recognize and act on what they read (Keene & Zimmermann, 1997). Skills of reflection and critical thinking are important for personal growth and learning. In the next chapter the importance of critical reading will be elaborated on.

What is not mentioned here is the importance of building background ahead of reading and for the students to possess prior knowledge about what they read. There is no doubt that reading a text with themes and issues that the students have limited prior background knowledge about, is difficult for them. Rosenblatt argues that readers use information, prior knowledge, and experiences stored in the mind in order to make meaning from a text (Rosenblatt, 1995). In this sense, reading becomes a meeting of textual meanings and the reader's prior knowledge, which together create a better understanding.

3.4 Why read?

There are several good reasons to read. Anne Lamott (1995) argues this gracefully:

For some of us, books are as important as almost anything else on Earth. What a miracle it is that out of these small, flat, rigid, squares of paper unfolds world after world (Anne Lamott, 1995, 15).

This does not mean, of course, that all students need to turn into passionate book lovers, the quote simply shows that enjoying literature can open unfamiliar dimensions in a human being who has learned to appreciate a visit to the different worlds literature can provide. Let us look at some of the benefits that reading offers.

First, reading is rewarding. Teachers have to teach this to students and show them models of great reading. By bringing good examples of literature to share with the students they will hopefully learn to appreciate literature. Students may have an instrumental approach to reading, seeing it as a way to gain knowledge.

However, to become an avid reader, it is important to realize that reading is not only about knowledge, it is also about pleasure.

Second, as shown previously, reading builds vocabulary. This, however, takes place over a long period of time and much reading.

Vocabulary is best developed through real encounters with the words in context, over time, and in small doses and time spent teaching vocabulary lists is better spent doing free voluntary reading (Krashen, 1993, 72).

This statement implies that vocabulary drills are not as effective as was once believed. Many students have studied hard, word after word to score high on a glossary test, only to experience shortly after, that every word has disappeared. Another problem is when students are required to look up words from a dictionary while reading. Besides the fact that this is time consuming, it also can lead to less fluent reading with constant interruptions and changes of focus.

Third, reading makes better writers. As mentioned, reading and writing go hand in hand. Krashen's research "strongly implies that we learn to write by reading" (Krashen, 1993, 72-73). People read more than they write and therefore they encounter more language that way.

All these reasons to read are important and interdependent. However, in addition, it has also been argued that by reading we develop our "moral compasses" since reading enables us able to build empathy for both people we have never known, and for lives we have not lived. The real value of a text "lies in our examination of the character's motives, behaviour, ethical dilemmas, and choices they made" (Rashimi Koushik, 2011, 29). All these issues involve the readers by making them aware of their own morality and humanity. In *Romeo and Juliet* for instance, there are several issues that are brought up and they all confront the reader with questions: *Does violence solve problems? Are there times when secrets should be told? Is teenage love real? Is love at first sight possible? Is suicide ever a reasonable option?* (Koushik, 2011, 29). These issues are questions of great relevance still today; they were not only on peoples' minds in the 1500s.

By asking questions like that, readers will constantly have discussions with themselves. In fact, the longest conversation you ever have is with yourself. Students will have conversations with themselves when they read a book. They are joining the human conversation, and hopefully they will expand their horizons by developing their moral compasses, gaining knowledge and perhaps question their own values. Together students and teachers have a great chance to explore the universal dilemmas of ethics and moral. As mentioned, Appleyard (1991) claims that all readers, and young adults specifically, are looking for answers to the big questions in life.

However, questions like these are not only discussed in “high-brow” literature as *Romeo and Juliet*, but in literature in general. This is also true for blockbuster literature. An issue to discuss here is whether readers are able to experience a literary and personal growth also through formulaic literature? Will reading “lighter” books lead to the same progress in becoming proficient readers or will their literary journey become less adventurous? This is what will be examined further.

3.5 What to read?

What constitutes “good” literature is difficult to assess. Literature is art and discussing art is difficult since it is rather an individual matter ¹. However, young people, and people in general, are concerned with values and identity. They worry about love, life and death. In the human sphere there is a combination of anxiety for both living and for dying. We all strive to find our true selves and to find a place to belong. Undoubtedly, this urge is stronger for children and young adults, than for more sedate middle age readers.

Children and students should get the chance to get a taste for old and great literature. Also, they should be allowed to devour new and easily digested books. They should get the chance to encounter both canons and popular literature. The

¹ Evidently, there is no room in this thesis for venturing into the discussion of good versus bad literature.

point is that reading can increase and develop a person's mind, irrespective of whether it is a book of the hour or a book of all time.

In school young adult readers must be given the opportunity to read books that are connected to their world, and here young adult literature is the key. This kind of literature mirrors their worlds and it is more relevant to them. As discussed previously, because of this they become better able to identify with both themes and characters. In young adult literature the main character is a teenager and the problems and events taking place are related to teenagers. The young readers are presented with their own culture, which makes them easier to connect to both mentally and emotionally. By letting students read young adult literature the teachers are saying that their problems, viewpoints and issues are important.

In addition, the language and dialogue used reflect their own speech (Sarah Herz & Donald Gallo, 1996). Young adult literature is, in this respect, "reader friendly". Students should be able to read and engage in such texts also because of the vocabulary. They will not have the need to look up words and expressions due to its "user-friendliness", and they will be free to enjoy these straightforward narratives. They will become motivated – a necessary prerequisite for success.

So far we have seen that good readers are characterized as people who are aware of their own thinking process and their own comprehension. Reading is both a constructive and an active process depending on the readers' attitudes and feelings. However, to develop and increase the students' pleasure in reading they need to be motivated in order to enjoy books.

3.6 Motivation

The key to reading success is finding the right motivation. In fact, motivation is the path to all learning, and motivation frequently makes the difference between learning that is temporary and superficial and learning that is permanent and internalized (Penny Oldfather, 1993, 46). Obviously, when we learn something

new, we remember it better if we have been motivated during the learning process. However, research has shown that students' motivation to learn seems to decrease during the elementary school years, not only in reading, but in all academic subjects (Jacquelynne Eccles, Allan Wigfield, & Ulrich Schiefele, 1998; John Guthrie & Allan Wigfield, 2000). Hence, the learning motivation appears to diminish, as children grow older. This is also true for reading.

Much has been written about reading motivation. Let us focus on the cognitive research from the 1980s and the research on motivation from the 1990s. Gambrell lists these researches. First, we have the cognitive aspects of reading. This aspect sheds light on the importance of having prior knowledge and strategic actions (Anderson & Pearson, 1984; Garner, 1987; Pressley, Borkowski & Schneider, 1987 in Gambrell, 1996, 15). Here, both affective and cognitive aspects of reading are important factors. Second, is the matter of possessing both skills and will to read, motivation and social interaction. Third, is the standing of cognitive and knowledge acquisition (Brandt, 1990; Csizsentmihaly, 1991; Ma Combs, 1989; Turner & Paris, 1995 in Gambrell, 1996, 15). These researchers emphasise that in order to become effective readers students need to have both skills and a will to read. All these factors play a part in reading motivation, and they are all interdependent. More practically then, what can be done to encourage students to read, to enhance their reading motivation?

In the article "Creating classroom cultures that foster reading motivation", Gambrell recommends six research-based factors that can help increase motivation to read: The teacher as an explicit reading model, a book-rich classroom environment, opportunities to choose, opportunities to interact socially with others, opportunities to become familiar with lots of books, and appropriate reading-related incentives (Gambrell, 1996, 20-22). Let us look more closely at these.

3.7 The teacher as an explicit reading model

To learn something new, children need good role models. This goes for reading as well. In order to pick up on this activity they need to see others valuing reading. In the classroom the teacher is supposed to be this person. According to Gambrell, research says that teachers who are avid readers and who love to read also have students who possess higher reading achievements (Gambrell, 1996, 20). Teachers who value reading and are able to share this love for reading often succeed in motivating their students to read. However, Gambrell argues that teachers need to share their own reading experiences, like reading aloud, showing exciting passages or paragraphs, characters, themes, or interesting turns of a phrase. By doing this teachers show the students how reading can enrich all our lives.

In this way, we demonstrate to our students that reading helps us learn more about the world in which we live, gives us pleasure and enjoyment, develops our vocabulary, and helps us become better speakers and more effective writers (Gambrell, 1996, 21).

Teachers need to encourage reading in school in order to encourage students to read out-of-school. Hopefully this will help the students on their way in becoming lifelong readers. Other ways to motivate students to read are to create a book-rich classroom environment with all kinds of books and spending time on free voluntary reading. In the following, these concepts will be elaborated on, starting with the reading environment.

3.8 The reading environment

One of the main goals in language education should be to encourage free reading (Krashen, 2004). Hence, the obvious step in achieving this is to have access to books. Practically, this can be made through school or/ and classroom libraries. These places should provide for a large selection of a variety of books, as Krashen points out, the better the print environment, the better the literacy development (Krashen, 2004, 62). Not only should these reading places offer a variety of books to choose from, these places should also be comfortable and

quiet so that the students are able to appreciate reading. To be given ample time to read is important as well.

Reading aloud is another effective method when increasing both literary competence and reading pleasure. “Children who are read to at school or at home read more and show better literary development, even college students” (Krashen, 2004, 78). Reading aloud in class gives the whole group of students a shared reading experience and a starting point for a joint discussion about literature. Of course, a challenge here is to find literature that appeals to most of the listening crowd, so finding the right book is essential.

The teacher plays a significant part in reading motivation. Gambrell argues “teachers become explicit reading models when they share their own reading experiences with students and emphasise how reading enhances and enriches their lives” (Gambrell, 1996, 20). Being read to has an indirect effect; hearing stories and discussing these will, according to Krashen, encourage reading and also, vocabulary knowledge will increase (Krashen, 2004). So basically, when listening to a book you actually build literary skills without being aware of it.

3.9 Free voluntary reading

Reading a book simply because you want to is free voluntary reading. There is no book report to be written or any questions to be answered at the end of each chapter. In this matter Krashen presents some hypotheses about language acquisition and literacy development when engaging in free reading (Krashen, 2011, 81). First, he says that when readers are really involved in a book language acquisition occurs most effectively. Second, reading should appear to be effortless in order for readers to best stimulate language development. Third, readers develop best when they are not aware that they are improving. Instead they are only aware of the content of the text they have read. Finally, if teachers constantly check for comprehension while reading, the students understand less, therefore, the less language they acquire.

Even though these are only hypotheses, Krashen's ideas of free, voluntary reading seem accurate as he claims that language development takes place in small steps at a time, without the readers being aware of literary benefits. Instead the readers concentrate on the content of what they read, which should be based on interests and individual choice of text. Most important is that they enjoy a certain text and how they read it.

As a last point in the discussion of motivational reading factors is the effect of light reading. Light reading is often referred to as comic books, teen romances, and magazines (Krashen, 2004). The teen romance gives the teen readers a chance to identify with the characters in the story, since love and romance is something that most teenagers find interesting. They find a mirror for themselves (Nodelman & Reimer, 2003, 25) when they are able to identify with fictional characters.

In this chapter I have discussed different aspects of reading that takes place in the classroom with emphasis on curriculum guidelines and reader involvement. We have seen that the engaged reader is someone who is motivated, strategic, knowledgeable, and socially interactive. To make the most out of reading we use different thinking strategies, mostly unconsciously however. In addition, it has become clear that we read in order to answer questions about others, the world, and ourselves. The best way to answer these questions is to be exposed by all kinds of literature. Evidently, both light reading and canonical literature should be able to live side by side on the shelf in interaction and promote reading ability and provide pleasure. When it comes to motivation and reading it is obvious teachers need to create a classroom environment that fosters reading.

Moving further let us examine how appealing texts can promote reading by looking into the world of popular literature and the fantasy genre. In this regard I will analyse the blockbuster series *The Twilight Saga* and examine to what extent these books can promote a pleasure for reading.

4. How can appealing texts promote reading?

As we have seen there are several factors that can motivate children to read. Now, let us have a closer look at one of these factors: appealing texts. I will here elaborate on the features of an appealing text and also discuss a specific type of books that young adults seem to embrace: popular literature. In this case I will focus on one of the most selling series this decade: *The Twilight Saga*, to see how it fits the bill for appealing texts. Millions have read these books since the first novel was released in 2005.

4.1 Characteristics of appealing texts

Fiction's primary purpose is to entertain. An appealing text casts a spell on its readers, and even though the descriptions and characterizations are not realistic, they seem to be. An appealing text gives the readers the opportunity to broaden and/or increase a deeper understanding of life and people. Ideally, while reading, a reader should experience an atmosphere that brings along feelings of understanding, recognition, and empathy. As mentioned by Keene and Zimmermann (1997) in the previous section, readers connect the story to their own experiences, to preceding readings, or to events that have taken place.

For a book to be appealing in the context of this thesis, its content and meaning should be believable and well recognized in order for the readers to make good sense of it and to be able to recognize and identify themselves with the character(s). For a novel to be attractive certain features need to be in place. It needs to have a well-ordered substance as well as a neat form with a good narrative structure. Popular literature offers this.

4.2 Popular literature

Much of the most selling fiction is part of what we loosely call popular culture. Popular literature, mass literature or trivial literatures are labels used for this type of literature. Basically, it is a way of stating that something is popular

among the general public/people and that it is consumed by a large part of the population (Helge Ridderstrøm). This formulaic literature always follows a known structure, a familiar pattern that is recognizable to the readers. This literary formula controls both the plot and the characterization. According to Sigmund Freud popular literature offers a place where secrets, forbidden desires and dreams can be lived out and freely put into words (in Cecilie Naper, 1999). This reminds very much of daydreaming. Popular literature, however, is not that personal as it generalizes and de-privitizes.

Popular literature is connected to the term easy reading, and there is a reason for that. One of the traits of popular literature is repetition, which gives the reader the opportunity to follow the story easily. There is no problem to pick up such a book every now and then without the need of total silence and devotion. Popular culture is clearly structured around on particular literary recipe. While reading the readers will enjoy the feeling of recognition, of having read this before, even though they have not read this specific book. There is some truth in the assumption that if you have read one book in the genre you have read them all.

4.3 Fantasy

Fantasy is a genre that fits into popular literature. As shown, children seem to lose their interest in reading, as they grow older. Could it be that they outgrow their childhood favorites? Obviously, children enjoy their childhood fairy tales, but as they turn into young adults they need new reading material with the same appealing flavor: fantasy literature, the perfect extension of fairy tales, may be the answer. The genre is well suited to cater to basic needs of escape and flights of fancy. Darren Harris-Fain points out that:

Fantasy literature includes elements that never have excised in the real life as we know it and because of the laws of nature, never can (Darren Harris-Fain, 2005, 4).

Fantasy welcomes the willing readers into worlds where normal limits and laws do not exist. Matthew Grenby claims that fantasy can "incorporate the serious

and the comic, the scary and the whimsical, the moral and the anarchic” (Grenby, 2008, 144). He continues to explain that fantasy can take place in alternative worlds, or that it can be set in the world we know. It presents carefully organized alternate realities that usually are controlled by firm rules. Central to much good fantasy literature are the questions about how identity remains unchanged despite external change and the process of self-discovery (Grenby, 2008, 164):

Fantasy is extremely well suited to consideration of questions of identity. The journey to another world, or another time, decontextualizes the protagonists, removing them from the structures the school, or the larger society. They then have to discover afresh who they are, and, usually, can return to their reality at the end of the novel with a stronger sense of themselves (Grenby, 2008, 164).

This ability of fantasy literature to cater to the need of identification could be one of the reasons why children’s fantasy has become progressively widespread. The child’s own history becomes activated and is intertwined in the story, a transaction. According to Rosenblatt’s transaction theory, fantasy can provide the readers with involvements that they do not necessarily experience in real life (Rosenblatt, 2005). Readers want to contribute in imaginary worlds.

Obviously, *The Twilight Saga* fits perfectly into the descriptions of both popular literature and fantasy. Also, the novels contain several aspects and themes that young adults will find interesting and possible to relate to their own lives as well. Not only is this fantasy, it also offers teenage romance, mystery, and action. However, in order to attain pleasure in reading there has to be a balanced diet when it comes to reading material. Let us take a closer look at the texts.

5. *The Twilight Saga*

Diet is a key issue in *The Twilight Saga* as it invites its readers into a world of vampires. In the books we meet Bella, an awkward teenage girl who has just

moved back to her childhood town of Forks, a quiet, small, rainy town in Washington, Northern America. As it turns out, this sleepy town is not so boring after all. At school she notices a special group of other students, the Cullens. They are all incredibly attractive. One of them is a 102-year-old vampire in the body of seventeen-year-old boy: Her soul mate, Edward. The series tells the story of Bella and Edward's forbidden relationship and of all the choices they have to make in order to stay together and Bella's sacrifice of her human life in order to turn into a vampire so that she can be with Edward forever.

As of October 2011 the series has sold over 116 million copies worldwide and has been translated into 37 languages (Wikipedia). Also, it has been made into five successful movies, a tie-in that is a typical trait of the blockbuster. What is it that makes *The Twilight Saga* such a tremendous sensation and such a compelling read? Is it because of the aspect of forbidden love, the classical love story, or simply the fascination for the unknown? Could it be because the books are both safe and exciting at the same time?

The readers escape from reality into a world quite different from the one they are familiar with. Even if the readers have not experienced this unfamiliar world, which they of course never will, they still can identify with both the characters and the themes in the books. Bella takes the readers into this fantastic world and we experience it through her eyes and feelings. In this vampire "bildungsroman", both the readers and Bella gain a sense of what this world is like and who she is.

5.1 Identity

As mentioned, Steffensen views identification as one of the most central fascinations of reading. Literature possesses many qualities that make identification possible and accessible:

The fascination of a text is in the experience of it and the fact that the readers are able to connect it to previous experiences. This way the text can trigger different associations that are necessary in order for the

reader to identify with the text and its world and inhabitants. The bigger chance for identification, the bigger the chance for great literary experiences (Steffensen, 2005, 49, my own translation).

In the books, the readers learn to know the characters by observing them through the first person narrator. In addition, these books make the readers draw on their own knowledge and experiences, which then lead to the readers becoming interested and personally involved in the texts. This brings us back to Rosenblatt's theory that the texts develop meaning and significance to the readers based on their individual interactions with what they read (Rosenblatt, 2005). This also brings back to the theory that readers want to read about characters similar to themselves (Reeves, 2004). Nodelman and Reimer's ideas are significant here as well as they state, "identification is the perception that a character in a work of literature is like oneself" (Nodelman & Reimer, 2003, 68). In fact, all books are about the reader.

Here, Steffensen's idea of identity as projection is worth mentioning again. He claims that readers see themselves and not the text. They use their own feelings to the fictional characters (Steffensen, 2005, 43-44). Teenage girls, who read *The Twilight Saga*, see themselves as Bella and in the transaction between the reader and the story Bella's feelings belong to the reader.

5.2 Vampires

Beside the identity aspect, another feature in the popularity of *The Twilight Saga* is the fascination for the unknown: the vampires, these fanged phantoms that seem to have been a winning factor in literature for centuries – "The vampire is one of the oldest, most resilient archetypes in modern media. It has existed in a variety of forms in nearly every culture around the world" (The Vampire in Modern American Media). Obviously, there is nothing new under the sun – or in this case of vampires, the moon would be a better choice of celestial body.

There are several reasons why vampires have become a success. They are utterly attractive, they possess super powers and super intelligence, they fall in love

with humans, and they are truly fascinating since they do not age. There has been great fascination for vampire stories for a long time. They started out portrayed as blood-sucking monsters. They were described as liberal, with not only great appetite for blood but also with strong sexual appetites. In *Myths and Metaphors of Enduring Evil*, Nursel Icoz claims that

in the nineteenth century the vampire became an erotic figure as the outcome of a process, which transformed the supernatural into the pathological and monsters into sexual perverts (Icoz in Peter Day, 2006, 214).

John Polidori's *The Vampire* from 1819 and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* from 1897 are both perfect examples of this early image of vampires. Dracula was known for his awakening of the innocent, pure and chaste female and turn her into a sensual human being. As the traditional vampires matured, they were a source of anxieties and disturbances felt by many people (Day, 2006). The female vampires were even more awe-inspiring and evoked even more desire than the male vampires. Meyer follows this tradition of creating beautiful vampires.

With "her" vegetarian vampires, Meyer redefines the commonly used image of the evil vampire as she challenges this liberal vampire tradition and gives the readers more feasibly vampires. It may even be claimed that these vampires portray perfection. The Cullen vampires are doubtlessly the strongest and the wealthiest. They are presented as "devastatingly, inhumanly" beautiful, wiser, better and of higher moral standing, than the rest of the population. Also, they are extremely white. Monica Dufault argues, the new and modern vampires personify success in the twenty-first century culture with designer-made clothes, their expensive living, and their fast cars (Dufault, 2011). Who would not be fascinated by their power and beauty? Identity, love, and enthrallment of the unknown are without a doubt elements that make this series such a triumph.

5.3 Critical reading

When reading popular literature, like *The Twilight Saga*, it is important not to lose oneself completely in the forever love aspect and take the story for granted.

It is important for young readers to be able to question, interrogate, and to analyze the texts. I also argued this issue when discussing different thinking strategies we use when reading, based on Keene and Zimmermann's theories (Keene & Zimmermann, 1997). In order to be capable of evaluating the typical tendencies to reinforce current values that we find in popular literature, the readers need to have a critical eye.

In *The Twilight Saga*, the current trends in society are expressed through very traditional gender values. The young readers have to be aware of this, and it needs to be made clear that the attitudes inherent in these books when it comes to gender roles are not necessarily compatible with a society that values gender equality highly. Let us further examine the issues that need to be dealt with critically, like gender roles, traditional values, sexuality, and patriarchy. However, let us meet the average reader of *The Twilight Saga* first, so that we know whom we are dealing with.

5.4 The reader of *The Twilight Saga*

Who is the typical reader of *The Twilight Saga*? Is the reader a typically obsessed teenage girl who enjoys the extreme, pent-up and unreleased passion within both the story and its portrayed characters? Julia Pearlman suggests the average reader to be a young, white, middle-class girl between the ages of twelve and seventeen (Pearlman, 2010, 7). However, not only teenage girls are drawn into Meyer's universe of vampires and true romance. A Danish survey shows that 40 year-old well-educated women as well tend to drift away into this world (Thomas Hoffmann, 2011). Obviously, quite a few female readers, no matter age, enjoy these books. As Thomas Hoffmann points out, readers enjoy texts that deal with familiar themes and issues, like romance, and they may also enjoy the mystery aspect of the series. Such romantic literature will never make it into the literary canon. However, amazingly many adult women enjoy reading *The Twilight Saga*. In the same Danish survey, the respondents actually admit that they are quite embarrassed by becoming so enthralled by this simple love story.

The reason why the books charm these female readers has to do with both the design of the books, and with the advantages these books give (Hoffmann, 2011). First, both form and structure are readable as the author writes in a rather breezily easy language in a first person narrative. The author also makes use of visual tools like different fonts and blank pages, which makes it easy for the readers to follow the protagonist's feelings. Second, the books have the effect those most reading enthusiasts recognize: the dreaming and drifting away while living the life of the main character's life. However, the main and most important ingredient in the series is love, and possibly the perfect man. Meyer portrays the unbelievably handsome and strong man, who is willing to do just anything for his woman. Here Bella stands looking at Edward in a scene in *Breaking Dawn*:

It was a surprisingly sensual experience to observe Edward hunting. His hands were so sure, so strong, so completely inescapable; his full lips were perfect as they parted gracefully over his gleaming teeth. He was glorious. I felt a sudden jolt of both pride and desire. He was mine.

(Bella, *Breaking Dawn*, 2008, 392)

Expressions as "sure", "strong", inescapable" underline his decisive masculinity, while the "gleaming teeth" add a sensual touch of vampire eroticism. Hoffmann argues that it seems that every woman is looking for the perfect relationship (Hoffmann, 2011). If this is a common assumption among the readers of *The Twilight Saga*, their critical and analytical skills need to be developed. Is it really that important for women to have a man and to live in an established relationship? This question is not only important for a woman's identity, but also for how others view her. This is a good topic for classroom discussions. *The Twilight Saga* serves as a good basis for discussing gender issues as stipulated by the curricula, as K-06 suggests that students are to learn about other people's values and views of life (Læreplanverket for Kunnskapsløftet). However, the idea of finding a home and a husband goes well with the conservative view of womanhood recognized throughout the novels (Pearlman, 2010). A woman's ultimate triumph is assumed to be marriage:

When she secures the attention and recognition of her culture's most powerful and essential representative, a man. The happy ending is, at this

level, a sign of a woman's attainment of legitimacy and personhood in a culture that located both for her and in the roles of lover, wife and mother (Janice Radway, 1984, 81).

To live a perfect life and have the perfect relationship are very taxing demands, and in this context often seen as the ultimate goals.

5.5 Values represented in *The Twilight Saga*

The Twilight Saga presents a society based on very traditional gender roles. It promotes values of chastity and strong, conservative views and it basically encourages a return to the 1950s ideals that centered on family and marriage. The series offers biased gender roles as it promotes a trend of domestic issues where the women find themselves in the home and especially in the kitchen. Not least, it endorses a return to the importance of true everlasting, love coupled with sexual abstinence.

The Twilight Saga portrays and promotes commonly held social mores and standards, as popular cultural phenomena often reinforce a nation's beliefs.

[...] individuals form their identities in conjunction with their culture's dominant ideologies, which they absorb through institutions like the media. By virtue of this absorption process, individuals are "interpellated" into those ideologies, becoming complicit in their own subjugation (Ilana Nash, 2006, 13).

If we go back in history women were supposed to stay at home, and care for their families. Meyer's female vampires are not working; they are demoted to home and family. Esme, Edward's "mother" is the personification of motherhood. According to Pearlman, "her vampirism is no threat to society for she maintains her femininity and womanhood by virtue of her role in the home" (Pearlman, 2012, 20). The same goes for Bella. One of Edward's reservations about turning her into a vampire is that she will miss out on the opportunity to become a mother. He says to her:

I hate taking [motherhood] away from you... I don't want to steal your future (Edward, *Breaking Dawn*, 2008, 25).

However, does a simple vampire story really have the power to enforce and shape thoughts like these and influence the (teenage) female readers? Is what we see perhaps only a parental wish for their youngsters to stay innocent and pure? It is tempting to conclude that parents and other adults believe that by mirroring and repeating moral values in popular culture, teenage readers will be “tricked” into adopting these. Ilana Nash (2006) goes as far as to suggest that:

Involvements like these are most likely an idea of reproducing appreciated beliefs and actions and to suppress mainstream teenage morals and values (Nash, 2006).

Passing on values like popular literature often seems to do should set the critical eye to a blinking. By encourage the students to connect, respond, and reflect on literature they are building a foundation for critical thinking and classroom discourse (Mark Letcher & Kelly Bull, 2009, 169). When developing the young readers critical and analytical skills, such books as *The Twilight Saga* serves as the perfect point of departure, the students’ first impression is that this is harmless entertainment. However, their second impression should be based on a critical analysis of what is actually being presented. This process may be genuinely rewarding when the students realize that they have been conned into accepting a gender bias that is not necessarily something that they would support normally. Young adult literature that promotes society values representing prejudiced gender roles should be questioned.

There are, not surprisingly, more girls than boys who read *The Twilight Saga*. However, they all experience issues of gender and society in the books. They also learn about their place in society and the power structure in the real world. This biased rendering of gender roles that we meet in the series are actually as serious for boys as for girls. Both groups are, under the guise of pure entertainment, presented with their roles that are firmly rooted in an unequal society. This is why they will need to be able to use analytical and critical tools to deal with their reading material. They will have to read critically so that they

know how to negotiate the gender roles presented in the books and to be able to discuss mass media and popular culture that constantly shape them.

Teenage girls (and boys alike) are subject to power structures on different levels that try to influence them. First of all is the power of patriarchy, which then reinforces the significance of motherhood. According to Ruth Saxton the adolescent girl is crucial to the reproduction of the social system. So, even if girls would want to have power, they are made powerless because of their given role in both specific situations and in society in general (Saxton, 1998). Saxton says:

The adolescent girl [...] is crucial to the replication of the social system. [...] So long as women's main function is conceived to be marriage and childbearing, and so long as wifehood and motherhood carry lower status than male pursuits, the adolescent girl will be in conflict with society (Saxton, 1998, XXV).

The power of patriarchal values over adolescent girls is also manifested in the fact that even if the girls represent sensuality; they are not supposed to show it. Girls are measured by looks and appearances, and their bodies are subject to constant assessment and prejudiced against. "The female body continues to be coded in patriarchal discourse as weak, incompetent and unstable" (Saxton, 1998, 7). This is clearly expressed in *The Twilight Saga*.

When Bella finally is turned into a vampire she constitutes no real threat to the social order since her sexuality is only expressed inside her marriage. Through the books the readers are told that the proper way of loving someone is within a marriage. Evidently, the female Twilight vampires are no threat to the patriarchy, they simply reinforce the ruling order and shows that women need men to survive; they simply cannot function without men.

The sexual aspect in the series is in fact an important task to interrogate. One example here is Edward, as he refrains from sexual intercourse until he is married. At the same time, he denies Bella's sexual advances. By doing that her identity as a woman is undermined by Edward's morality (Pearlman, 2011, 62). Underlying this is a moral assumption and message to the young female

readership that they should do the same, and that the decent thing to do is to wait for a dedicated and loving patriarchal relationship. In *The Twilight Saga* Edward awakens Bella's desires. However, he strives to keep her clear of crossing good, Christian values and she maintains her purity and virginity. When trying to seduce him for the umpteenth time, he rejects her like an adult rejects a child:

He pushed me away at once, his face heavily disapproving.
"Be reasonable, Bella".
"You promised – whatever I wanted", I reminded him without hope.
"We're not having this discussion." He glared at me while he refastened the two buttons I'd managed to open.

(*Eclipse*, 2007, 393)

There is a constant conflict between a woman's body as political, and at the same time sexual (Pearlman, 2011, 52). In *The Twilight Saga* this is shown when Bella becomes a vampire with physical powers in the end. She has gained her adulthood and has finally become a mother and her gendered person is fulfilled, as she vies her life to her husband and daughter. Finally, she is saved from her adolescent awkwardness.

As we see, Meyer's vampires strengthen current traditional values. "Her" vampires bring us back to a patriarchal society. Radway claims that female readers tend to enjoy popular culture based on social connections and the patriarchal culture in which today's women lives in (Radway, 1984, 81). Is it likely, as argues, that female readers are looking for new social structures and a less male dominated world, or could it be that they simply long for the patriarchal, traditional society where men are men and women are women? My analysis of *The Twilight Saga* does not, however, give any indication that the female readership of Meyer's fictional universe would be looking for new social structures. In any case, they will certainly not find them among the fanged phantoms.

5.6 Should *The Twilight Saga* be read at all?

Even if it looks like *The Twilight Saga* offers more damage than pleasure, it has qualities and features that make it appealing, such as the identity and the recognition aspects. It provides for an active and creative interaction between the reader and the author. However, like most bestsellers, *The Twilight Saga* cannot boast serious literary qualities. So the question is whether young adults should read this kind of literature as it might well be considered void of any literary merit.

The answer is – yes, they should. Studies show that popular and/or light reading can serve as a conduit to more advanced reading. Krashen's studies demonstrate that reading provides motivation for more reading and also, they show that linguistic competence, which the readers achieve, makes more difficult reading possible:

Perhaps the most powerful way of encouraging children to read is to expose them to light reading, a kind of reading that schools pretend does not exist, and a kind of reading that many children, for economic or ideological reasons, are deprived of. I suspect that light reading is the way nearly all of us learned to read (Krashen, 2004, 92).

Reading provides motivation for further reading and it promotes language competence, both of which need to be in place in order to master more advanced reading.

Appealing texts may be a great motivator when it comes to promoting reading. Popular literature is one type of texts in this context. *The Twilight Saga* has been read by millions and is a good example of popular literature that can be used in the classrooms. The series gives pleasure and as shown in the previous section, it can work as an excellent point of departure for a discussion of gender roles in class. Arguably, *The Twilight Saga* should work well as reading material in order to promote reading pleasure among young adults, while serving as a springboard for further activities.

6. Conclusion

In order to shed light on how to promote the pleasure of reading, my thesis has addressed four research questions:

1. What characterizes the general reading process and its benefits?
2. What characterizes reading in the classroom?
3. How can appealing texts promote reading?
4. What characterizes such an appealing text (the example of *The Twilight Saga*)?

As I have shown, several theoretical aspects characterize the reading process. In order to make meaning of a text there has to be an interaction between the reader and the text. Rosenblatt argues for the important “transaction” that takes place between the text and the reader. The reader brings own experiences and prior knowledge to the text, and during this transaction the reader makes individual interpretations of what he or she read. This is also in close relations with reader identity. The text works as a mirror that reflects the readers and not themselves.

Steffensen divides the identity aspect into two types of identities: Introjection identity, where the readers give themselves the characteristics of the fictional person(s) possess, and projection identity, which is when the readers transfer their own feelings to the characters in a story.

Benefits from reading are not only characterized by personal development. The literacy benefits are important as well. By reading, we improve our skills in reading, writing, grammar, and in vocabulary. Krashen argues that free, voluntary reading will lead to improvement in knowledge and that academic texts, as a consequence of this, will be easier to read.

My second research question deals with the school setting. In the classroom, the teachers need to be good reading models by sharing their own reading experiences, reading aloud, showing exciting passages or paragraphs, characters, themes, or interesting turns of phrase. Krashen's studies have shown that book-rich classrooms environments with all types of literature, together with the opportunity to spend time on free voluntary reading will motivate students to read.

One great motivator when promoting the pleasure of reading is the text itself. Motivating texts are the beginning and the end when it comes to reading. The curriculum guidelines state that students are to meet a variety of texts, both from different genres and diverse times and places. They are also to encounter other people's values, view of life, and culture through reading. Since readers do not come with the same competence - both literary competence and/or linguistic competence - the individual aspect of reading needs to be taken seriously. Lazar points out the important fact that each reader is unique.

So let us look at my third question then: How can appealing texts promote reading? Appealing texts give the young readers the opportunity to experience an atmosphere that brings along feelings of understanding, recognition, and empathy. Both content and meaning need to be believable and well recognized in order for the readers to recognize and identify themselves with the character(s).

The fourth and last research question investigates the characteristics of such an appealing text, and I argue that *The Twilight Saga* fits the specification. The books are compelling, the way they offer romance, mystery, action, and suspense. Keeping the aimed for audience of this series, the teenage girls, in mind, it is obvious that they easily identify both with the protagonists and the themes in the books. They re-create the text within their minds, and see themselves as Bella.

However, if young students are to read this kind of popular literature it is important to teach them how to read critically. In *The Twilight Saga* the readers

are presented with traditional, patriarchal values that presuppose motherhood as the ultimate goal for a woman, and the male dominance is part of the natural order of the world. As discussed, it is in the nature of the genre to both mirror and reinforce dominant societal values. Such values must be examined, and the vampire saga may in fact serve as an excellent point of departure for many interesting classroom discussions.

So then, do light, popular fictions belong on school bookshelves at all? My answer is “yes” – There are so many benefits that come from reading: more knowledge, better vocabularies, we become better writers, and perhaps the most importantly, we experience identification and we become more aware of our own values and morals. By travelling the journey of reading theories with different aspects of both the act and the pleasure of reading it is obvious that by reading we build cognitive and literacy muscles that we need in order to understand not only the world, but also ourselves.

There is no question that popular literature promotes reading and fosters the love of reading. Reading is an important investment for the future. With all the benefits that reading provides – do we dare to question its worth?

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